

Family TableTalk

Conversation 89

Your Words Have Power

read

Proverbs 15:1

think

Have you ever gotten into a disagreement? Had an argument? Engaged in a conversation that turned into a shouting match? I'm guessing that like me, your answer is "yes" . . . several times over. Because we are broken human beings who struggle with sin, it makes sense that when two sinners find themselves in conflict with each other, things can turn ugly and escalate fast. Sadly, this tends to happen most often when the two sinners are in the same family.

The Book of Proverbs is a book full of wisdom, with much of that wisdom focusing on the fine art of communication. Following Proverbs' wise guidelines for speaking and listening fosters healthy communication that can grow - rather than undermine - our relationships. In Proverbs 15:1 we read wise words about "soft answers" and "harsh words." We have a choice regarding which we use, and each option leads to a certain end. Soft and gentle answers calm the potential for conflict and help people to cool down. Harsh and grievous words serve to fuel anger and allow conflict to escalate.

Think for a minute about the conversations that take place in your home, especially those conversations centered on a disagreement. Maybe you are disagreeing on discipline, politics, curfews, social media limits, or any of a thousand other things that parents and their kids might have a difference of opinion. Parents, think about your interactions with your spouse. Think of these disagreements as little fires that could go in one of two directions rather quickly. If one or both of you choose harsh words, think of those words as gasoline that, when thrown on the fire, cause the fire to grow and potentially rage out of control. Fires like that are destructive. But a soft and gentle answer is an answer that is like a bucket of cold water that extinguishes something that could quickly rage out of control..

apply

- Think back over times of verbal conflict within your family. Have each person recall a time when *they themselves* threw the "gasoline" of harsh words into the flames. What happened?
- Have everyone think of times of verbal conflict when *someone else* in the family calmly threw the cold water of a soft answer into the mix. What happened?
- Good communication is an act of worship. Have everyone share a way in which they can improve in their communication skills, and then pray for each other, that the Holy Spirit would work in each individual and in the family as a whole.

pray

Lord, you have created us in your image. We have the unique ability to communicate with each other in deep and significant ways. We confess that in our sin we too often choose to throw fire on our conflicts rather than calming our conflicts with soft words. Help us to see that our communication is not about who wins, but rather, who glorifies God through the wise use of soft words. Amen.

by **Walt Mueller**

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